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SPAN must probe water disruption in Penang and Kedah, says Chow

The Penang chief minister wants an investigation as more than 600,000 Penangites and Kedahans are affected by the water cuts.



Chief minister Chow Kon Yeow (third from left) and PBAPP CEO K Pathmanathan (right) at the Lahar Tiang water treatment plant in Kepala Batas today. With them are exco members Phee Boon Pooh and Zairil Khir Johari.

KEPALA BATAS: Penang chief minister Chow Kon Yeow has called on the National Water Services Commission (SPAN) to investigate the disruption of water supply that has affected hundreds of thousands of consumers in Penang and Kedah.

Yesterday, Kedah menteri besar Sanusi Nor said a sensor failure at one of the barrages on Sungai Muda opened a floodgate which let the river water flow out to sea, causing water supply disruptions in the two states.

“We want an investigation to be carried out. More than 400,000 consumers are affected in Penang, (and) more than 200,000 consumers are affected in Kedah,” Chow told reporters during a visit to the Lahar Tiang water treatment plant here today.

Yesterday, the Penang water supply corporation (PBAPP) warned of disruptions in water supply until Wednesday, affecting hundreds of thousands of consumers in Seberang Perai’s three districts and in Penang island as well.

PBAPP CEO K Pathmanathan said Sungai Muda’s water level had dropped by half to one metre instead of the minimum two metres required to extract raw water for treatment. The river is the main source of raw water for Penang.

He said PBAPP was not sure when full production of treated water would resume as that was dependent on the river water level returning to normal.

Chow also called for Putrajaya to set up the Ulu Muda Basin Authority to manage the Ulu Muda basin effectively and professionally. The idea was jointly proposed by PBAPP and the Penang state government two years ago.

Chow said both Kedah and Penang are highly dependent on the Ulu Muda basin, which includes Sungai Muda for water supply and irrigation.



“We must not ignore the importance of conserving this river basin properly for the good of our people, our economies, and the future of the Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCER),” he added.

Still no water, low water pressure

Meanwhile, on the current status of the water disruption in the state, Pathmanathan said 10%, or over 40,000 consumers, are still facing no water or low water pressure in the southwest Penang island district.

The localities affected are Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah, Jalan Sungai Tiram, Penang International Airport, Bayan Lepas, Gertak Sanggul, Sungai Batu, Pulau Betong, Permatang Mayang Pasir, Batu Hitam, Jalan Pondok Upeh and Jalan Teluk Kumbar.

Earlier today, PBAPP said water supply recovery in Seberang Perai and Penang island had reached 90% as of 9am.

On a separate matter, state infrastructure and transport executive councillor Zairil Khir Johari said the state government plans to talk to natural resources, environment, and climate change minister Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad about hosting talks between both Penang and Perak state governments on the Sungai Perak raw water transfer scheme.

The scheme, which was proposed by the state government, would draw water from Sungai Perak to meet increasing demand from Penangites for domestic and industrial usage.

DID conducting post-mortem on sensor failure

Meanwhile, state irrigation and drainage department (DID) director Nazri Yasmin told reporters that the automatic sensor at one of the barrages on Sungai Muda was fixed immediately upon detection of its failure.

He added that DID is carrying out a post-mortem on the automatic sensor failure, and is also planning to replace the actuators at the 14 water gates along Sungai Muda.

“If these (replacements) are carried out, I believe that such an incident (sensor failure) would not happen again,” he said.